

## **NCS Begins Deployment of Nationwide Wireless Priority Service**

ARLINGTON, Va., January 21, 2003—The National Communications System (NCS) today announced implementation of the Wireless Priority System (WPS) to areas of the Eastern United States and plans to expand to a full nation-wide capability through 2003.

The initial carrier for the WPS service is T-Mobile, which signed a contract with the NCS through DynCorp, its Government Emergency Telecommunications Service and Wireless Priority integration contractor.

"We are very excited and proud that we now have the initial capability to provide the Nation's leaders, first responders and key critical infrastructure personnel with wireless priority communications during periods of emergency," said Brenton C. Greene, Deputy Manager of the National Communications System. "We've worked hard with T-Mobile and all of our industry partners to develop a program that meets the President's request for an emergency wireless communications service. This is a major first step."

Greene indicated there are more steps telecommunications partners in expanding WPS to cover the entire country. "T-Mobile is the first of what we hope will be a full slate of major wireless carriers ready to step up and support WPS nationwide," said Greene. "We are also working very hard to secure the funding and complete the work that will allow us to reach a full operating capability of WPS by the end of 2003."

The NCS said it plans to add other global system for mobile communications (GSM) carriers (AT&T Wireless, Cingular, and Nextel) in the near future. NCS plans to add code division multiple access (CDMA) carriers such as Verizon Wireless and Sprint PCS as soon as funding allows. The capability is designed to have minimal impact, if any, on normal consumers using cellular networks, balancing emergency priority and customer access.

A limited WPS service has been operational in the Washington and New York metropolitan areas since May 2002. The initial nationwide capability is now available in both New York and Washington, as well as in metropolitan areas surrounding Atlanta; Birmingham, Ala.; Boston; Jacksonville, Fla.; Louisville, Ken.; Memphis, Tenn.; Miami; Mobile, Ala.; Nashville, Tenn.; New Orleans; Norfolk, Va.; Philadelphia, and Richmond, Va. Additional markets will be added nationwide over the next few months, as will further enhancements to the capability.

When trying to make a call in times of emergency or natural disaster, national security and emergency preparedness users will have the ability to gain priority access to the next available cellular channel to place their call. This service will greatly enhance their ability to complete wireless calls during critical times and communicate vital decisions and reports during emergency situations. WPS is available only to designated leadership at all government levels, national security, emergency responders, and private sector critical infrastructure leaders and decision makers, as approved by Federal Communications Commission Rules and Requirements and the NCS. Further, WPS has been designed to have negligible impact on regular cellular users, providing priority access to vital decision makers without restricting the public's ability to gain access to those same networks.

"WPS is an important capability for U.S. national security and emergency preparedness said Gary Jones, Director of Standards Policy for T-Mobile. "NCS, the FCC, and others in the Administration and Congress have worked to make WPS a top priority and to ensure it was implemented as soon as possible. With the initial stage of Nationwide WPS operational before the end of 2002, great progress has been made. T-Mobile is pleased to have been awarded a Nationwide WPS contract, and we know that is a capability that national security and emergency preparedness officials want and will adopt quickly."

The wireless priority services program couples well with its wireline counterpart, the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS), to dramatically improve end-to-end call completion during emergencies. GETS, available since October 1995, was extremely successful during the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.

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